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Complete Works *of* Abraham Lincoln

Edited by
JOHN G. NICOLAY *and* JOHN HAY

With a General Introduction *by*
RICHARD WATSON GILDER, and Special Articles
by OTHER EMINENT PERSONS

Indexed

VOLUME I

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Preface

"May 30, 1893.

"*My dear Nicolay:* As you and Colonel Hay have now brought your great work to a most successful conclusion by the publication of your life of my father, I hope and request that you and he will supplement it by collecting, editing, and publishing the speeches, letters, state papers, and miscellaneous writings of my father. You and Colonel Hay have my consent and authority to obtain for yourselves such protection by copyright, or otherwise, in respect to the whole or any part of such a collection, as I might for any reason be entitled to have.

"Believe me, very sincerely yours,

ROBERT T. LINCOLN.

"JOHN G. NICOLAY."

Both in fulfilment of the request contained in the foregoing letter, and in execution of a long-cherished design, we present to the public this

edition of the Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, hoping and trusting that it will be received as a welcome addition to American historical literature.

JNO. G. NICOLAY,
JOHN HAY.

Nearly thirty-five years have elapsed since the preceding words were written, and during that period the assiduity of a multitude of Lincoln collectors has brought to light a large amount of manuscript material which inevitably escaped even such conscientious workers as Nicolay and Hay. The collectors have been so diligent during this period it is hardly probable that any of Lincoln's writings of importance can be any longer undiscovered. The aim has been to collect this material, add it to the work of the two great biographers, and so make a complete and definitive edition.

The chronological arrangement of the original edition has been followed and all new additions to the text inserted in their respective places and marked with an asterisk.

Explanatory and biographical notes have been added where deemed necessary to explain obscure allusions or to preserve the continuity of the narrative. These notes are mostly new;

those for which Nicolay and Hay remain responsible are in this edition signed with their initials.

Lincoln's personality inspired hundreds of the most prominent men of the 19th century to utter some tribute to his genius. The best and most appropriate of these have been selected as introductions to the different volumes of this edition.

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Special thanks are also due to numerous private collectors who have assisted the work by giving valuable suggestions and lending autograph letters, illustrations, etc., particularly to Mr. Judd Stewart of Plainfield, N. J., Major William H. Lambert of Philadelphia, Mr. C. W. McLellan of New York, Judge Daniel Fish of Minneapolis, and Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the "Century Magazine."

Illustrations

GROUP OF LINCOLN, NICOLAY, AND HAY . *Frontispiece*
Photogravure from a photograph taken in 1863, now in possession of Mr. Judd Stewart.

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Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SANGAMON COUNTY,
MARCH 9, 1832 ¹

FELLOW-CITIZENS: Having become a candidate for the honorable office of one of your Representatives in the next General Assembly of this State, in accordance with an established custom and the principles of true Republicanism, it becomes my duty to make known to you, the people whom I propose to represent, my sentiments with regard to local affairs.

Time and experience have verified to a demonstration the public utility of internal improvements. That the poorest and most thinly popu-

¹ Lincoln was just past his twenty-third year when he indited this address to the people of Sangamon County. Though defeated in the effort to become a member of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, his address, distributed in the form of a hand-bill, aroused great interest and enthusiasm among his fellow-citizens. It is worth passing mention to note that this defeat for the Illinois Legislature was the only one Lincoln ever suffered by direct vote of the people.

lated countries would be greatly benefited by the opening of good roads, and in the clearing of navigable streams within their limits, is what no person will deny. Yet it is folly to undertake works of this or any other kind without first knowing that we are able to finish them,—as half-finished work generally proves to be labor lost. There cannot justly be any objection to having railroads and canals, any more than to other good things, provided they cost nothing. The only objection is to paying for them; and the objection arises from the want of ability to pay.

With respect to the County of Sangamon, some more easy means of communication than it now possesses, for the purpose of facilitating the task of exporting the surplus products of its fertile soil, and importing necessary articles from abroad, are indispensably necessary. A meeting has been held by the citizens of Jacksonville and the adjacent country, for the purpose of deliberating and inquiring into the expediency of constructing a railroad from some eligible point on the Illinois River, through the town of Jacksonville, in Morgan County, to the town of Springfield, in Sangamon County. This is, indeed, a very desirable object. No other improvement that reason will justify us in hoping for can equal in utility the railroad. It is a never-failing

source of communication between places of business remotely situated from each other. Upon the railroad the regular progress of commercial intercourse is not interrupted by either high or low water, or freezing weather, which are the principal difficulties that render our future hopes of water communication precarious and uncertain.

Yet, however desirable an object the construction of a railroad through our country may be; however high our imaginations may be heated at thoughts of it,—there is always a heart-appalling shock accompanying the amount of its cost, which forces us to shrink from our pleasing anticipations. The probable cost of this contemplated railroad is estimated at \$290,000; the bare statement of which, in my opinion, is sufficient to justify the belief that the improvement of the Sangamon River is an object much better suited to our infant resources.

Respecting this view, I think I may say, without the fear of being contradicted, that its navigation may be rendered completely practicable as high as the mouth of the South Fork, or probably higher, to vessels of from twenty-five to thirty tons burden, for at least one half of all common years, and to vessels of much greater burden a part of the time. From my peculiar circumstances, it is probable that for the last

twelve months I have given as particular attention to the stage of the water in this river as any other person in the country. In the month of March, 1831, in company with others, I commenced the building of a flatboat on the Sangamon, and finished and took her out in the course of the spring. Since that time I have been concerned in the mill at New Salem. These circumstances are sufficient evidence that I have not been very inattentive to the stages of the water. The time at which we crossed the mill-dam being in the last days of April, the water was lower than it had been since the breaking of winter in February, or than it was for several weeks after. The principal difficulties we encountered in descending the river were from the drifted timber, which obstructions all know are not difficult to be removed. Knowing almost precisely the height of water at that time, I believe I am safe in saying that it has as often been higher as lower since.

From this view of the subject it appears that my calculations with regard to the navigation of the Sangamon cannot but be founded in reason; but, whatever may be its natural advantages, certain it is that it never can be practically useful to any great extent without being greatly improved by art. The drifted timber, as I have before mentioned, is the most formidable bar-

rier to this object. Of all parts of this river, none will require so much labor in proportion to make it navigable as the last thirty or thirty-five miles; and going with the meanderings of the channel, when we are this distance above its mouth we are only between twelve and eighteen miles above Beardstown in something near a straight direction; and this route is upon such low ground as to retain water in many places during the season, and in all parts such as to draw two thirds or three fourths of the river water at all high stages.

This route is on prairie-land the whole distance, so that it appears to me, by removing the turf a sufficient width, and damming up the old channel, the whole river in a short time would wash its way through, thereby curtailing the distance and increasing the velocity of the current very considerably, while there would be no timber on the banks to obstruct its navigation in future; and being nearly straight, the timber which might float in at the head would be apt to go clear through. There are also many places above this where the river, in its zigzag course, forms such complete peninsulas as to be easier to cut at the necks than to remove the obstructions from the bends, which, if done, would also lessen the distance.

What the cost of this work would be, I am

unable to say. It is probable, however, that it would not be greater than is common to streams of the same length. Finally, I believe the improvement of the Sangamon River to be vastly important and highly desirable to the people of the county; and, if elected, any measure in the legislature having this for its object, which may appear judicious, will meet my approbation and receive my support.

It appears that the practice of loaning money at exorbitant rates of interest has already been opened as a field for discussion; so I suppose I may enter upon it without claiming the honor, or risking the danger which may await its first explorer. It seems as though we are never to have an end to this baneful and corroding system, acting almost as prejudicially to the general interests of the community as a direct tax of several thousand dollars annually laid on each county for the benefit of a few individuals only, unless there be a law made fixing the limits of usury. A law for this purpose, I am of opinion, may be made without materially injuring any class of people. In cases of extreme necessity, there could always be means found to cheat the law; while in all other cases it would have its intended effect. I would favor the passage of a law on this subject which might not be very easily evaded. Let it be such that the labor and

difficulty of evading it could only be justified in cases of greatest necessity.

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the Scriptures, and other works both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.

For my part, I desire to see the time when education—and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry—shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate that happy period.

With regard to existing laws, some alterations are thought to be necessary. Many respectable men have suggested that our estray laws, the law respecting the issuing of executions, the road law, and some others, are deficient in their pres-

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